

Whether one hive or one hundred, it's important to register your bee hive

DOVER, Del. – Healthy Bees are essential to Delaware's vegetable production and agricultural economy. Bee-pollinated crops account for 15 to 30 percent of the food we eat (USDA 2013). Other crops may not be completely dependent on managed pollinators, but benefit from bee pollination. Delaware growers produce several crops which require insect pollination. These crops include watermelons, cucumbers, strawberries, cantaloupes, apples, blueberries, cranberries, squash, pumpkins and brambles. Watermelons make up the largest segment of these crops. In 2014, a total of 2600 acres of watermelons were planted in Delaware, and generated \$13MM in sales. Bees are also essential for the pollination of wildflowers, and native trees and shrubs which are the backbone of the state's forests and natural areas, which yield the fruits and seeds which sustain wildlife. Honey bees spend the spring and summer gathering nectar, which they convert into Delaware honey, a popular item in the state's more than 25 Farmer's Markets.

Earlier this year, the Delaware Department of Agriculture unveiled its Managed Pollinator Protection Plan to protect and enhance populations of bees and other valuable pollinators in the state. The Plan includes best management practices that beekeepers, fruit and vegetable growers, and pesticide applicators can use to help pollinators thrive. It also includes strategies to increase the quantity and quality of pollinator forage on private and public lands. The Pollinator Plan contains voluntary Best Management Practices (BMPs) for pesticide users, landowners/growers, and beekeepers in hopes of ensuring both a robust apiary industry and agriculture economy, reducing pesticide exposure and subsequent risk of

pesticides to pollinators, and continued high compliance with state pesticide and apiary requirements. The plan can be reviewed at <http://dda.delaware.gov/pdfs/DelawarePollinatorPlan2016.pdf>.

Apiary and beekeeper registration requirements are listed in Delaware's Beekeeping Law (Title 3, Chapter 75). Anyone who keeps bees is subject to this law, which serves agriculture by protecting the pollination services offered by the thousands of colonies of bees managed by beekeepers. These colonies are both managed within the state, and transported into the state for pollination. Bee colonies are chronically exposed to parasitic mites, viruses, diseases, pesticides, and poor nutrition, which weaken them and make them less able to handle these stressors. Honey bees in agricultural, suburban and urban areas compete for often scant floral resources and congregate with honey bees from neighboring apiaries. The potential for pest and disease transfer (horizontal transmission) and competition between beekeepers, is thus dramatically increased. The DE Beekeeping laws aim to reduce the impact of these stressors through specific requirements of all beekeepers in the state, such as hive registration, colony and equipment inspection for sale, trade or gifting of bees.

The Beekeeping Law includes appointment of a State Apiarist, who is charged with numerous duties to protect the health of Delaware bees. These duties include inspection of hives and queen rearing apiaries, maintaining a list of registered beekeepers, and promoting the science of beekeeping through education and other means. In addition, for registered beekeepers the State maintains a roster of swarm removal and pollination services, as well as hosting BeeCheck, a pesticide application notification system at no cost to the beekeeper. By law, the State Apiarist and state bee inspectors may enter any public or private premises, and have access to and from all apiaries or places where bees and bee equipment are kept, to inspect them for pests and diseases. The State Apiarist may

also declare a quarantine and order destruction or treatment of hives, for serious pest or disease situations.

Whether 1 hive or 100, all persons keeping bees in Delaware are required by law to register annually with the State Apiarist. Section 7504 of the law states, "All persons keeping bees in this State shall notify the State Apiarist within 10 days of the time the bees are acquired, of the number and location of colonies they own, or rent, or which they keep for anyone else, whether the bees are located on their own or someone else's property." All persons keeping bees must register annually with the Delaware Department of Agriculture, on or before January 30 of each year. The Beekeeping law specifies penalties for violations. Anyone who violates the beekeeping law, is subject to a civil penalty of no less than \$100 and no more than \$1000 per count. Delaware's beekeeping law can be found at: <http://delcode.delaware.gov/title3/c075/>.

The beekeeper registration form can be found at the Delaware Department of Agriculture's website, on the forms tab: <http://dda.delaware.gov/plantind/forms.shtml>. It is a one-page form, and there is no registration fee. For assistance with completing the registration form, or for questions about Delaware's Apiary Program, please contact the State Apiarist, Meghan McConnell, Meghan.McConnell@delaware.gov and 302-698-4500.

###

Media Contact: Stacey Hofmann, Community Relations Officer, 302-698-4542, Stacey.Hofmann@delaware.gov